

## WITH THE PYGMIES

From 6<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> May 2016, His Grace Panteleimon, Bishop of Congo-Brazzaville and Gabon paid a pastoral visit to the Parish Community of the Forerunner and St Nicholas in Impfondo, Northern Congo, accompanied by the Reverend Father Sergios Mabelemo, Parish Priest of the Parish Church of the Resurrection of the Lord in Brazzaville.

On Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> May the Bishop went to the tropical forest where the Pygmies live, who have embraced the Orthodox faith. During his meeting with members of the tribe – most of whose members during this period are in the depths of the forest of central Africa seeking prey. His Grace spoke simply about the Resurrection of the Lord. He also gave them a quantity of salt and soap, which are necessary items for their hunter's way of life.

He also expressed to them his sorrow on the passing of the very old leader of the tribe twenty days previously, the late brother Bokale, and also repeated his request for the erection of a specific place within the compound, according to traditional way of building, so that the new Parish Priest of Impfondo can visit the tropical forest once a month and conduct the Divine Liturgy in this place for the facilitation of the Pygmies who face mobility problems. In conclusion he conveyed to all the paternal love and concern of His Beatitude Theodoros II, Pope and Patriarch of Alexandria and All Africa.

The visit concluded with His Grace visiting the oldest members of the tribe;